

The Prime Minister of Israel

January 18- 2025

Statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, this evening:

"Dear citizens of Israel.

On October 7, our enemies perpetrated the worst massacre against the Jewish People since the Holocaust. But amidst this terrible disaster was shown the great strength of the spirit of the people and the supreme heroism of our fighters.

It is this strength that has led us with determination to achieve all of the objectives of the war that we set: Returning all of our hostages, eliminating Hamas' military and governing capabilities and ensuring that Gaza will never again constitute a threat to our country.

In the War of Redemption, we have made it clear to our enemies and to the entire world, that when the people of Israel stand together, there is no force that can break us.

I am proud to be Prime Minister of our wonderful people. I am proud to lead our country at such times.

The Security Cabinet and the Government have approved the framework for the return of our hostages. This is the objective of the war from which we will not relent until it will be completed.

The sacred mission to release hostages has accompanied me throughout my life, from my IDF service and throughout my years as Prime Minister.

Together with you, citizens of Israel, and together with many people around the world, my wife Sara and I have hoped, prayed and worked for the return of all of our hostages. I think about them all the time.

My wife Sara has put her entire heart and soul into caring for the families and for those who have returned, and she has been working for them both at home and abroad.

I know that this concern is shared by all families in Israel. I promise you – we will insist on all the objectives of the war. We will bring all of them back home.

As of today, we have returned home 157 of our hostages, 117 of whom alive. Under the agreement that has now been approved, we will return home another 33 of our brothers and sisters, most of them alive.

This agreement is, first of all, the result of the heroism of our fighters in combat, and it is also the result of our steadfast insistence on Israel's vital interests, in the face of heavy pressure at home and abroad.

This agreement is also the result of cooperation between the outgoing administration of President Biden and the incoming administration of President Trump.

From the moment he was elected, President Trump has been involved in the mission for the release of our hostages. He spoke with me Wednesday evening. He welcomed the agreement and rightly emphasized that the first stage of the agreement is a temporary ceasefire. That is what he said, 'a temporary ceasefire'.

Ahead of the next stages of the agreement, we retain significant assets in order to return all of our hostages, and in order to meet the objectives of the war.

Both President Trump and President Biden have given full backing to Israel's right to return to the fighting, if Israel reaches the conclusion that the second stage negotiations are ineffectual. I greatly appreciate this.

I also greatly appreciate President Trump's decision to lift the remaining restrictions on providing vital weapons and munitions to the State of Israel.

If we need to go back to the fighting, we will do so in new ways and with great force.

During the negotiations, I determined several basic principles:

The first principle – Safeguarding the ability to return and fight as per need. For many months, Hamas demanded that we promise in advance to end the war as a condition for its entering a framework for the release of the hostages, and it set all kinds of additional dictated terms. I strongly

opposed these dictated terms – and my position was accepted. We retain the right to return to the war, if necessary, with the backing of the US.

And not for nothing, all senior American administration officials have unanimously attested that it was Hamas that hindered the negotiations.

The second principle that I insisted on, the most important principle: I significantly increased the number of living hostages that will return in the first stage. I am pleased to tell you that this insistence has borne fruit. Contrary to Hamas's position in May, we have almost doubled the number of living hostages that are due to be released in the first stage.

And the third principle – keeping the Philadelphi Corridor and the security buffer zone. When I say keeping the Philadelphi Corridor, not only will we not reduce our forces there, we will even increase them slightly, and this is contrary to all of the reports that I hear.

We promised in the agreement that Israel would keep full control in the Philadelphi Corridor and the security buffer around the entire Gaza Strip. We will not allow war materiel to be smuggled in, nor will we allow our hostages to be smuggled out.

We determined that terrorists who committed murder will not be released to Judea and Samaria – they will be expelled to the Gaza Strip or abroad, and we decided in the Security Cabinet on a very significant increase in our forces in Judea and Samaria in order to protect our citizens.

Now, what has caused Hamas to change its position? First of all, the painful blows that our heroic fighters have landed on Hamas, and the rest of our enemies, on the battlefield. Second, our policy of striking our enemies on seven fronts with force that they have never seen.

We eliminated Sinwar, Deif and Haniye. We eliminated Nasrallah and the entire Hezbollah leadership. We destroyed most of the weaponry of the Syrian military. We struck the Houthis in Yemen. We acted against Iran. Indeed, we struck all of these very hard, that is to say that we struck the entire Iranian axis very hard – and we are still active.

Just as I promised you, we have changed the face of the Middle East.

And as result of all this, Hamas has been left battered and isolated in the campaign. This is exactly how the conditions were created for the turning point in its position and for the release of our hostages. Today Hamas has agreed to what it did not agree to previously.

Citizens of Israel, the War of Redemption has demanded of us tough decisions but it is in these decisions that leadership is tested. These were decisions that took into account our comprehensive national and security considerations. I regret that I cannot detail all of them to you here.

On October 7, we took a severe blow. We experienced terrible pain. With joint forces, we repelled our enemies and achieved considerable results. The entire world, friends and enemies alike, has been impressed by these historic achievements.

My dear citizens of Israel, I see the emotion. I see with uplifted spirit your inner strength. I want to thank you for the confidence and backing that you have given me and my colleagues to lead the State of Israel in these fateful times.

I see our people at their best; the men and women of the IDF regular forces and reserves, the men and women of the Israel Police, the men and women in the ISA, the Mossad and the Prison Service, the emergency and rescue forces, the volunteers and our entire people in its full glory.

In the storm of battle and horror of war, we take to our heart with shared sorrow, love and appreciation, those who have paid the heaviest price of all – our brothers and sisters in the bereaved families, the dear bereaved families.

We embrace our wounded in body and soul, the families of our hostages, the residents who have been displaced from their homes in the north and the south, whom we are committed to returning home.

I take all of you into my heart and I tell you – the campaign is still not over. A long and challenging journey still lies before us. This is not the time to disband and disperse, this is the time to unite and come together. This is what the heritage of Israel commands us. This is what the generation of victory demands of us.

We are winning because the spirit within us is winning. This is the spirit of an ancient people, a people that has refused to surrender to those who have risen up to destroy us.

Together, with G-d's help, we will defeat our enemies; we will ensure our future.
Because there is redemption and 'there is hope for your future, says the LORD; and your children shall return to their own border' [Jeremiah 31:16]."



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